Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

receiving <u>from multiple application programs executing within one or more computer environments, instructions intended for one or more target computer-based devices, said instructions being issued by the application programs in high-level, non-target device specific formats interpretable by a software communication portal receiving said instructions</u> ~~at least one high-level request regarding at least one designated device of a plurality of devices from at least one application program~~;

translating<u>, at the software communication portal, said instructions from the high-level, non-target device specific formats to target device specific formats appropriate for software drivers associated with respective ones of the target computer-based devices for which said instructions were intended and according to target computer-based device information specified in the instructions;</u> ~~the at least one high-level request to at least one low-level request~~; and

communicating the <u>instructions as formatted in the target device specific formats from the software communication portal to each of the software drivers as appropriate according to the target computer-based device information specified in the instructions.</u> ~~at least one low-level request to at least one device driver associated with at least one device.~~

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

receiving at least one low-level message from at least one <u>of the target computer-based devices</u> ~~device~~; ~~and~~

translating the at least one low-level message to at least one high-level message; and

> forwarding the at least one high-level message to the at least one application program that sent the at least one ~~of the instructions in~~ high-level, non-target device specific formats ~~request~~.

3.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the at least one of the instructions ~~request~~ comprises at least one of a status request and a control request.

4.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein receiving the instructions ~~request~~ is achieved via one of /proc file system, ioctl, system call and direct function call.

5.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

> regularly gathering a plurality of statistics regarding the one or more target computer-based devices ~~plurality of devices~~.

6.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5 further comprising:

> periodically forwarding a high-level message reporting the plurality of statistics regarding the one or more target computer-based devices ~~plurality of devices~~ to the at least one application program.

7.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5 further comprising:

> determining which of the one or more target computer-based devices ~~plurality of devices~~ issued errors that exceed a threshold number of errors based on evaluation of the plurality of statistics; and
>
> sending shut-down messages to each of the one or more target computer-based devices ~~those of the plurality of devices~~ that issued errors that exceed a threshold number of errors.

8.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5 further comprising:

> retrieving a plurality of configuration information from a primary device of the one or more target computer-based devices ~~plurality of devices~~; and
>
> applying the configuration information to a secondary device when the primary device is taken off-line.

9 - 14. (Canceled)

15.   (Currently Amended) A machine readable medium having stored thereon instructions which when executed by a processor cause a machine to perform operations comprising:

> receiving from multiple application programs executing within one or more computer environments, instructions intended for one or more target computer-based devices, said instructions being issued by the application programs in high-level, non-target device specific formats interpretable by a software communication portal receiving said instructions at least one high-level request regarding at least one designated device of a plurality of devices from at least one application program;

> translating, at the software communication portal, said instructions from the high-level, non-target device specific formats to target device specific formats appropriate for software drivers associated with respective ones of the target computer-based devices for which said instructions were intended and according to target computer-based device information specified in the instructions; the at least one high-level request to at least one low-level request; and

> communicating the instructions as formatted in the target device specific formats from the software communication portal to each of the software drivers as appropriate according to the target computer-based device information specified in the instructions. at least one low-level request to at least one device driver associated with at least one device.

16.   (Currently Amended) The machine readable medium of claim 15, wherein the instructions cause the machine to perform operations further comprising:

> receiving at least one low-level message from at least one of the target computer-based devices device;

> translating the at least one low-level message to at least one high-level message; and

> forwarding the at least one high-level message to the at least one application program that sent the at least one of the instructions in high-level, non-target device specific formats request.

17.   (Currently Amended) The machine readable medium of claim 15 wherein the at least one of the instructions ~~request~~ comprises at least one of a status request and a control request.

18.   (Currently Amended) The machine readable medium of claim 15, wherein the instructions caused the machine to perform operations further comprising:

regularly gathering a plurality of statistics regarding the <u>one or more target computer-based devices</u> ~~plurality of devices~~.

19.   (Currently Amended) The machine readable medium of claim 18 , wherein the instructions cause the machine to perform operations further comprising:

periodically forwarding a high-level message reporting the plurality of statistics regarding the <u>one or more target computer-based devices</u> ~~plurality of devices~~ to the at least one application program.

20.   (Currently Amended) The machine readable medium of claim <u>18</u> ~~15~~, wherein the instructions cause the machine to perform operations further comprising:

determining which of the <u>one or more target computer-based devices</u> ~~plurality of devices~~ issued errors that exceed a threshold number of errors based on evaluation of the plurality of statistics; and

sending shut-down messages to each of <u>the one or more target computer-based devices</u> ~~those of the plurality of devices~~ that issued errors that exceed a threshold number of errors.

21.   (Currently Amended) The machine readable medium of claim <u>18</u> ~~15~~, wherein the instructions cause the machine to perform operations further comprising:

retrieving a plurality of configuration information from a primary device of the <u>one or more target computer-based devices</u> ~~plurality of devices~~; and

applying the configuration information to a secondary device when the primary device is taken off-line.

22.   (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

receiving <u>from multiple application programs executing within one or more computer environments, instructions intended for one or more class of target computer-</u>

based devices, said instructions being issued by the application programs in high-level, non-target device specific formats interpretable by a software communication portal receiving said instructions ~~a high-level request regarding a class of devices from an application program~~;

translating, at the software communication portal, said instructions from the high-level, non-target device specific formats to target device specific formats appropriate for software drivers associated with respective ones of the class of target computer-based devices for which said instructions were intended and according to the target computer-based device information specified in the instructions; ~~the high-level request into a least one low-level request~~; and

communicating the instructions as formatted in target device specific formats from the software communication portal to each of the software drivers as appropriate according to the target computer-based device information specified in the instructions. ~~at least one low-level request to each of a plurality of devices in the class of devices via at least one device driver associated with the plurality of devices.~~

23. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 22 further comprising:

receiving at least one low-level message from at least one of the target computer-based devices ~~device~~;

preparing at least one instructions in the target device specific format ~~low-level request~~ to other target computer-based devices responsive to the at least one low-level message;

receiving a group of low-level messages from at least one of the target computer-based devices ~~those of the plurality of devices~~ that received the instructions in the target device specific format ~~low-level request~~;

processing the group of low-level messages to create a single high-level message; and

forwarding the single high-level message to the application program.

24. (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein the class of devices comprise a group of digital subscriber line (DSL) devices.

25. (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein the group of DSL devices comprise at least two of a DSL modem, a Digital Signal Processor (DSP) device, a plain old telephone system (POTS) device, a synchronous optical network (SONET) hardware, an E1 device, a T3 device, T1 hardware, an asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) device, a very high speed DSL (VDSL) device, and a Gigabit Ethernet device.

26. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

    providing a multiplexor, including

        a high-level interface to receive <u>from multiple application programs executing within one or more computer environments, instructions intended for one or more target computer-based devices, said instructions being issued by the application programs in high-level, non-target device specific formats</u> <s>a plurality of high-level requests from at least one application program</s>, and

        a low-level interface to receive a plurality of low-level messages from <u>software drives associated with one or more target computer-based devices</u> <s>a plurality of device drivers for the plurality of devices</s>;

    the multiplexor configured to

        translate <u>said instructions from the high level, non-target device specific formats to a first group of instructions in target device specific formats appropriate for the software drivers associated with respective ones of the target computer-based devices for which said instructions were intended and according to target computer-based device information specified in the instructions</u> <s>the high level requests to a first group of low-level requests of a plurality of low-level requests</s>;

        communicate the <s>low-level requests</s> <u>instructions as formatted in the target device specific formats</u> to <s>at least one</s> <u>each</u> of the device drivers <u>as appropriate according to the target computer-based device information specified in the instructions</u>;

        translate the low-level messages to at least one high-level message; and

        forward the high-level message to at least one application program.

27. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 26 wherein the multiplexor is further configured to:

    translate the low-level messages to a second group of <u>instructions in target device specific formats</u> <s>low-level requests</s>.

28.   (Original) The method of claim 26 wherein the devices are a plurality of digital subscriber line (DSL) devices.